



McNary and Umatilla National Wildlife Refuges

Planning Update #2, January 2007

What's in the Preferred Alternative?

■ Includes habitat improvements for waterfowl, shorebirds, threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, wetland and deepwater habitats, riparian habitats, islands, cliffs, and shrub-steppe habitats. These are the key conservation targets designated in the plan. The plan identifies the desired habitat structures and conditions for these targets and lays out strategies (such as reducing invasives, planting natives, and controlling wildfire) to attain these conditions.

■ Focuses recreational improvements on priority wildlife-dependent uses, including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation.

■ Although not wildlife-dependent uses, horseback riding would be allowed to continue in designated areas. To protect sensitive wildlife habitats, island beaches would be closed to all use and a no-wake zone of 100 feet would be implemented around islands in Refuge waters. Camping at Madame Dorion park would be discontinued.

More detail and a comparison of the alternatives is inside on pages 5-7.

Where to Get the Plan

Copies are available in the References Section of the Richland Public Library, Hermiston Public Library, Walla Walla Public Library, and Umatilla Public Library. You may request a compact diskette from the Refuge office at (509) 371-9212, or you may access the full document, including maps, online at <http://pacific.fws.gov/planning>. A limited number of copies are available to borrow from the Refuge Complex office in Richland. Copies of the full document have been mailed to agencies and organizations that have been actively involved in the planning process.



Geese on slough. USFWS photo

Refuges Release Draft Plan and Environmental Assessment

The Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan/Environmental Assessment (Draft CCP/EA) for the McNary and Umatilla National Wildlife Refuges is available for public review and comment.

We want to thank all those who have taken the time to be involved in our planning so far. Your comments were considered during development of the draft alternatives summarized on page 2.

Between now and February 23, interested citizens, agencies, and organizations will have a chance to review and comment upon the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Draft CCP/EA, which includes the Service's analysis of four alternatives for management of the Refuge over the next 15 years.

Alternative 2 is the Service's preferred alternative.

Three open house meetings are scheduled (see back page). We have included a Comment Form as an insert to this planning update. Your thoughts and comments on the Draft CCP/EA are very important to us and we encourage you to write them down and send them to us. At the end of the comment period, the planning team will evaluate your comments and consider their incorporation into the Final CCP. We will publish and distribute the Final CCP, which will guide management of McNary and Umatilla Refuges over the next 15 years. Actions will be implemented as funding becomes available.

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Overview of the Plan Alternatives

Alternative 1: Emphasize Migratory Waterfowl Management and Consumptive Public Uses

Under Alternative 1, the Refuges would focus on providing migratory waterfowl with high quality, easily accessible food, by expanding both crop production and wetland food plants. Secure resting areas would be provided for overwintering and migrating waterfowl. Hunting and fishing would be emphasized, with improvement to facilities and increased habitat improvements for game species. A State pheasant augmentation/release program would be phased out and camping would be discontinued at Madame Dorion park. Other public uses would continue at approximately current levels.

Alternative 2: Emphasize Migratory Birds and Special Status Species and Wildlife-Dependent Public Uses (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, the Refuges would improve habitats for all migratory birds and certain rare or threatened species. The Refuges would emphasize control and reduction of weeds and improvement of wetland, riparian, shrub-steppe, island, and cliff habitats. Wildlife-dependent public use would be emphasized with opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, interpretation and environmental education maintained or improved from present conditions. A State pheasant augmentation/release program would be phased out in two years and camping would be discontinued at Madame Dorion park. Disturbance to island resources would be reduced through closure of all beach use and establishment of a no-wake zone within 100 feet of Refuge islands.

Alternative 3: Emphasize Native Species Diversity and Non-Consumptive Public Uses

Under Alternative 3, existing island, riverine, and shrub-steppe habitats would be improved and degraded habitats restored to a more native condition. Management would contribute to the recovery of threatened, endangered, or rare species such as salmon, steelhead, and long-billed curlews. Hunting and fishing would be available at most current sites except pheasant and fish stocking would be eliminated and fewer acres would be managed as croplands for waterfowl food. Opportunities for wildlife-dependent non-consumptive uses would be expanded. Camping would be discontinued

Your Previous Comments

In June 2004, you wrote us with feedback about the Refuges. An analysis of all comments is posted at the refuge website at www.fws.gov/midcolumbiariver/. Some of the views expressed:

Why are the Refuges special to you?

"We all enjoy the refuge not only for hunting but enjoy seeing birds that you don't get to see everyday."

"I bring my first grade student to learn about wildlife habitat. My family and I enjoy the refuge as a peaceful place to walk and appreciate nature."

"When the Columbia River dams were built miles of riparian habitat was lost. The UNWR replaced a small fraction of the once intact river corridor. Wildlife that lives on the refuge are vital to this area and replicate flooded habitat."

Which issue is most important to you?

"Improved habitat and infrastructure"

"Continue a meaningful hunting program so that a strong support base is not lost."

What suggestions do you have?

"It is hard with the number of hunters to get in good hunts."

"Increased funding for noxious weed control."

and all island areas would be closed to public access, and a no-wake zone within 100 feet of Refuge islands would be established.

Alternative 4: Continue Current Management

Alternative 4 is the "no change" alternative required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Refuges would continue programs at current levels as described in detail in Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6. Specifically, the Refuges would maintain, and where feasible, restore habitat for waterfowl, migratory birds, and State and Federally-listed species. Existing public uses, including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, interpretation, environmental education, horseback riding, camping, boating, and limited beach use would continue.

Public Comment Form

McNary and Umatilla National Wildlife Refuges Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment

1. Which Alternative Appeals to You the Most?

☐ Alternative 1 ☐ Alternative 2 **(Service Preferred)** ☐ Alternative 3 ☐ Alternative 4

2. Why Does this Alternative Appeal to You?

3. Additional Comments (more room on back or attach additional comments on separate pages if needed):

Name _____ Organization _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Thanks very much for your time!

Please return this form to us at the open houses, fax it to Greg Hughes at (509) 375-0196, or fold and send back to the Refuge Complex via U.S. mail. You may also submit comments via e-mail to FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov.

Please type McNary/Umatilla CCP in the subject line.

All comments received from individuals, including names and addresses, become part of the official public record and may be released. Requests for such comments will be handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations [40CFR1506.6(f)] and other Service and Departmental policies and procedures.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will use this information to better serve the public.

There is no requirement to provide a response or to use this form. Response is voluntary, and providing your name, organization, and address is optional.

Comments (continued):

Please fold on the dotted line, tape, affix stamp, and mail.

Return address:



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Fish & Wildlife Service
Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife
RefugeComplex
3250 Port of Benton Blvd.
Richland, Washington 99352

Summary of CCP Actions, By Alternative. McNary and Umatilla National Wildlife Refuges

Key Themes / Issues	Alternative 1	Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative)	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
	Emphasize Migratory Waterfowl and Consumptive Public Uses	Emphasize Migratory Birds, Special Status Species, and Wildlife-Dependent Public Uses	Emphasize Native Biodiversity and Non-Consumptive Public Uses	Continue Current Management (No-action Alternative)
Waterfowl				
Croplands: Total Acreage Share to Refuges	2,400 acres 25%	2,100 acres 25%	1,850 acres 25%	2,100 acres 25%
Grain Availability over Season and During Emergency Weather Conditions	390 acres scheduled for mid winter (post-hunting season) knockdown. 70 acres for late season knockdown. Emergency knockdown under severe weather conditions.		Most knockdown late Jan-mid Feb (no scheduled late season knockdown and no provisions for emergency knockdown	
Moist Soil Management: Total Acreage Floodup for Early Migrants	406 acres 30 acres flooded by 9/15	366 acres 30 acres flooded by 9/15	Decrease acreage All flooded 10/25 or later	356 acres All flooded 10/25 or later
Shorebirds				
Foraging Area: Mudflats on Columbia River Alternate Foraging Sites	Same as Alt. 3 and 4	20 acre increase for migration. Alternate sites at moist soil units.	No change to existing mudflat acres. No alternate sites provided.	
Curlew Upland Habitats	Existing suitable habitat maintained	Existing habitat maintained and suitable nesting and foraging habitat increased by 25% on inactive former croplands.		Existing suitable habitat maintained
Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species				
Salmon Rearing Habitats	None	Protect and where feasible enhance backwaters and side- channel habitats.		Some backwater areas used for salmon rearing.
Inventory for Rare Species not Monitored by Other Agencies	No inventory conducted	Undertake inventory. Specific habitat or population management strategies determined in step down plan.		Minimal inventory conducted
Wetland and Deepwater Habitats				
Shallow Marsh Management: Open Water Areas Created Emergent Invasives Cover	96 acres/year < 20%	67 acres/year < 20%	0 acres Reduced	33 acres/year Variable (30-50%)
Elimination of Carp	Eliminated at 4 wetlands	Eliminated at 2 wetlands	No effort to reduce carp.	
Riparian Habitats				
Nesting Habitats Improved	0 acres/year	62 acres/year	5 acres/year improved	5 acres/year improved
Cottonwood Developed	0 acres/year	5 acres/year	0 acres/year	0 acres/year

Summary of CCP Actions, Continued

	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Islands and Cliffs				
Waterbird Populations and Coordination	Habitat maintained to support diversity of island-nesting birds and colonies. Continued coordination with partners on research, monitoring, and management of Refuge colonies of salmonid-smolt eating birds.			
Reduce Disturbance to Island Wildlife to Protect Nesting and Breeding Ares	Same as Alt. 4	Existing island closures to be enforced. No beach use. No-wake zone within 100-feet of islands on Refuge waters.		Islands mostly closed in summer but some trespass issues. Crescent Is. open for waterfowl hunt.
Protection of Rocky Habitats	No mining, collection or extractive activities permitted on any natural Refuge rocky features. Baseline inventory of plant and wildlife resources (Alts 1, 2, and 3 only). Protection for raptor nesting sites and limit public uses to Big Six uses.			
Shrub-Steppe Habitats				
Existing Habitats Improved	64 acres/year	192 acres/year	288 acres/year	64 acres/year
Restoration of Roads, Mining Sites, and Inactive Croplands	100 acres	350 acres	600 acres	0 acres
Protection from Fire and Ground Disturbance	No emphasis	Active measures taken with partners, public, and contractors to reduce fire damage and soil disturbances.		Frequent fires burn about 1,000 acres annually.
Wildlife Observation, Photography, Interpretation, and Trails				
McNary Opportunities	No changes to current trails, viewing, and interpretive opportunities.	Trail/interpretive improvements at Headquarters and Wallula Units.	Trail and interpretive improvements at Headquarters Unit.	Existing trail, viewing and interpretive signs at McNary Headquarters Unit.
Umatilla Hwy 14 Interpretive Overlooks	No change	Improved and expanded	No change	Interpretive signs at several overlooks on Hwy. 14
Umatilla Heritage Trail	Consider Heritage trail realignment.	Add benches, blind, sun shades, and potential side trails to Heritage Trail; consider realignment. Add interpretive area at check station.		County Heritage Trail traverses Refuge. Portions of trail unsafe during hunt season.
Hunting				
Waterfowl Hunt Types	Reservation fee hunting, posts/free roam, & youth hunts.			
Waterfowl Hunt Areas	25,952 acres	25,739 acres	25,698 acres	25,905 acres
Sanctuary Areas	Alt 4 minus Col. River shoreline at McCormack	Alt 1 plus East McCormack Slough	Alt 4 plus East McCormack Slough	Existing areas (44% of Umatilla, 24% of McNary)
Upland Bird Areas	All open units. Hunting improved at Peninsula (eliminating mowing at former goose blinds).		Upland game bird hunting provided on all open units.	
Upland Bird Hunt Schedule	Hunt days and times standardized		Variety of days/start times	
Upland Permits (McCormack)	Permits reduced to 15 on opening two weekends.		25 daily permits, crowding issue on opening two weekends	
Pheasant Releases (McNary)	Pheasant augmentation phased out in 2 years (Service policy prohibits non-native stocking).			State pheasant releases
Deer Hunt (McCormack)	Doe hunting emphasis to reduce population and address vegetation impacts issue.			Hunt open at current level.

Summary of CCP Actions, Continued

	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Fishing				
Diversity of Fishing Opportunities	Maintain diverse opportunities, including State seasonal stocking of rainbow trout at Quarry Pond for youth and family fishing. Improve parking facilities and access.		Same as Alt. 4 except Quarry Pond stocking ended.	Plentiful walk-in and boating fishing opportunities. Stocking for family fishing at one pond.
Tournament Fishing	Work in partnership with States and others to develop standard tournament permit conditions. No tournament access within ½ mile of pelican nest colonies.			Several tournaments on both Refuges
Fishing Outreach and Information	Develop fishing brochure or tear sheets. Install kiosks at two on-Refuge and two off-Refuge boat launches.		Large numbers of anglers and boaters using Refuges but little Refuge information is disseminated to this user group.	
Environmental Education				
Number of Students Served	McNary: 1500-3000 Umatilla: 0	McNary: 1,500 – 3,000 Umatilla: 100-500		McNary: 1,500-3,000 Umatilla: 50
Teacher Led Program	Some emphasis	At least 75% of the classes teacher-led.		Some emphasis.
EE Facilities at McNary	Continue EE program at McNary Environmental Education Center at Burbank Slough.			
EE Facilities at Umatilla	None	Field study sites integrated into East McCormack Slough		None
Non-Wildlife Dependent Uses				
Horseback Riding	Same as Alt. 4	Improve signing, outreach, and interpretive materials. Riders allowed on public roads and horseback designated trails.		Riding allowed on public roads and designated trails. Limited information / facilities.
Camping at Madame Dorion	Madame Dorion Park available for day use for Big Six uses. Eliminate camping. Maintain existing rest area facilities.			Camping permitted under temporary coop agreement
Swimming and Beach Use	Same as Alt. 4.	Island beaches closed to all use.		Beach use permitted on designated portions of Umatilla Islands in summer. Heavy beach use on Strawberry Is.
Law Enforcement				
Illegal Shooting and Dumping	Reduce dumping at Burbank Sloughs unit by 80%. Eliminate target shooting.			Illegal shooting and dumping
Cultural Resources				
Monitoring and Protection	Increased with greater survey effort, enforcement, training, and consultation with Tribes.			Enforcement, consultation and project review per NHPA.
Interpretation Programs	Develop interpretive materials in partnership with Tribes and historical societies.			No active interpretation
Bank Stabilization	Seek funding to stabilize eroding banks to protect buried cultural resources			No funding for bank stabilization sought

Come Review the CCP at the Public Open Houses

Each open house will afford people an opportunity to learn more about the CCP alternatives. Maps and other supporting materials will be available for your perusal and comment. We hope you can make it!

**February 1, 2007
4:00 pm - 7:00 pm
Riverfront Center,
Boardman, OR**

**February 6, 2007
4:00 pm - 7:00 pm
McNary Environmental
Education Center,
Burbank, WA**

**February 8, 2007
5:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Red Lion Hotel
2525 North 20th Avenue
Pasco, WA**

Directions from Interstate 84: take City of Boardman Exit # 165. Turn onto Main Street, heading north towards the Columbia River. Go across the railroad overpass. Turn right onto Marine Drive and follow for 1 mile to Riverfront Center.

Directions from Tri-Cities: follow State Highway 12 east, crossing over the Snake River. At the first light past the bridge, turn left onto Maple street. Follow signs into Refuge parking lot.

Directions from other points in the Tri-Cities: The Red Lion Hotel is located just off I-182 at the Airport /20th Avenue exit (exit 12-B). Turn north from freeway toward the airport. Hotel will be on the right hand side.



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We are on the web at <http://www.fws.gov/midcolumbiariver/>

*Have you moved? If so, please send us
updated address information. Thanks!*

Refuge Open House Meetings in February!